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SUBJECT: USAID/DART Overview of Search and Rescue Operations in Haiti

REF: PORT A 0054; PORT A 0058; PORT A 0060

¶1. (U) Summary. Despite January 22, U.N. and media reports that the Government of Haiti (GoH) has declared the end of the search and rescue phase, multiple urban search and rescue (USAR) teams continue to work in Port-au-Prince. According to the U.N. Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team, between January 13 and 21, international USAR teams rescued a total of 132 people, of which 47 individuals were by rescued by U.S.-based USAR teams. As the international focus shifted from rescue to relief activities, U.S. USAR teams began departing Haiti, with two of six teams leaving on January 23, followed by two more on January 24. Although the majority of remaining international USAR teams are expected to depart in the coming weeks, a small group of U.S. USAR personnel will remain in-country to conduct assessments of damaged public buildings and provide training and equipment to local first responders, in coordination with the GoH. End Summary.

SHIFTING FROM RESCUE TO RELIEF

¶2. (U) According to UNDAC, the GoH announced the end of the search and rescue phase at 1600 hours local time on January 22. However, GoH officials subsequently informed the U.S. Embassy that the GoH has not officially terminated search and rescue operations. UNDAC reports that between January 13 and 21, international USAR teams rescued 132 people in total, of which 47 were rescued by U.S. USAR teams. The total UNDAC figure does not include two rescues that occurred on January 22 and January 23 by Israeli and French USAR teams, respectively.

¶3. (U) At the peak of the search and rescue phase, 67 international USAR teams, comprising 1,918 staff and 160 dogs, were operating in Haiti, according to UNDAC. Although UNDAC reports that the number of international USAR teams in Haiti has significantly decreased in recent days, USAID has been unable to confirm the exact number of teams remaining in-country. USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) reported that, on January 23, the search and rescue component of the On-Site Operations Coordination Center (OSOCC), the organization responsible for dispatching and coordinating search and rescue requests, concluded operations.

U.S. USAR TEAMS

¶4. (U) On January 12, immediately following the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Haiti, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) began activating U.S. USAR teams for immediate deployment to Port-au-Prince. Between January 13 and 16, six U.S.-based USAR teams with 506 personnel and 29 search dogs arrived in Haiti. The six U.S. teams included a 114-person team from the Fairfax County Fire Department, a 72-person team from Los Angeles (L.A.) County Fire Department, an 80-person team from Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, an 80-person team from South Florida, an 80-person team from the Virginia Beach Fire and Rescue Department, and an 80-person team from the New York City Fire and Police departments.

¶5. (U) To help establish an UNDAC base of operations, USAID/OFDA also authorized and funded the deployment of a three-person Americas Support Team to Haiti, staffed by the Fairfax County Fire Department. In addition, the Fairfax and L.A. County fire departments seconded two staff members to UNDAC to assist with

operations and coordination throughout the response.

¶6. (U) USAID/OFDA has provided more than \$36 million in support of American search and rescue teams deployed to Haiti, in addition to annual funding provided to the Fairfax and L.A. County fire departments for USAR training and activities.

¶7. (U) USAID/OFDA has also provided millions of dollars in support of training for search and rescue teams based in Latin America and the Caribbean, in coordination with the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG). Of the 67 international search and rescue teams deployed to Haiti, teams from at least five countries have received training funded by USAID/OFDA. (Note: USAID/DART team leader Tim Callaghan has served as the chairman of INSARAG Americas since May, 2003. End note.)

¶8. (U) Preparations for the demobilization and departure of the U.S. USAR teams in Haiti continues. The New York and Virginia Beach-based teams departed Haiti on January 23. The Miami-Dade and South Florida teams departed on January 24. The USAID/DART is evaluating a final departure schedule for the remaining two USAR teams from Fairfax and L.A. counties.

ANALYSIS OF SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS

¶9. (U) Recent search and rescue operations in Haiti are unprecedented, resulting in the largest number of known rescues in an international response. To the surprise of many, live rescues were still conducted 11 days after the earthquake, far surpassing the expected 72-hour window of survival. On January 17, U.S. USAR teams conducted a record-breaking 12 rescues - five days (120 hours) after the earthquake. (Note: Although there have been instances of trapped individuals surviving for approximately 15 days in collapsed buildings, USAR experts indicate that the lack of rainwater and high temperature in Haiti significantly reduce the

chances of finding others alive. End note.)

NEXT STEPS

¶10. (U) In coordination with the GoH and local fire authorities, U.S. USAR teams plan to leave behind a significant cache of equipment for donation to local first responders. In addition, 15 U.S. USAR staff members, including six structural engineers and two members each from the Miami-Dade, Fairfax, and L.A. County fire departments, will remain in-country to train Haitian fire and rescue personnel in the use of the donated equipment. The 15-person team will continue to assess damaged buildings in and around Port-au-Prince - particularly hospitals, schools, and other public buildings - to ensure they are safe for continued occupancy and use. Wherever possible, U.S. USAR personnel will provide technical assistance for building stabilization efforts. In addition, should a rescue operation become necessary, the combined U.S. USAR team remains fully equipped and ready to respond.
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